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Human rights questions: Implementation of human rights instruments; comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Security Council
Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 28 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit a statement issued on 25 August 2000 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea in response to Ethiopia's allegations against Eritrea on "violation of human rights" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 116 (a) and (d), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Tesfa Alem **Seyoum**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 28 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ethiopia's wild allegations underlie a sinister motive

In the past two weeks, the Ethiopian regime has been making wild allegations against Eritrea for purported "violation of human rights". The smear campaign has been accompanied with thinly veiled threats of military action.

For background information and in order to put matters in perspective, we shall cite excerpts from international News Agency reports. In this regard, an AFP story of October 22, 1999 under the title: "**Eritrean Deportees to be Forced Across Mined Area**" reads:

- "Ethiopia put about 13000 Eritreans on 29 buses, which officials now claim, are now headed through the most hazardous route, where there is a red alert and a build-up of troops by both sides".
- ICRC spokesman for Africa, Juan Martinez, said from the ICRC headquarters in Geneva: "The ICRC was not in favour of transporting people because there was no guaranteed safe passage. We approached the Ethiopian authorities and said we did not agree with the trip and asked them to reconsider. We are really concerned. They have decided to do this against our will. It is a **violation of the Geneva Conventions and it is not acceptable**".

Another AFP report of July 21, 2000 titled "**Ethiopia blocks return of its nationals from Eritrea reads:**

- "More than 1,000 Ethiopians have been blocked at the last minute by their government from returning home from Eritrea, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said Friday. The ICRC said that Addis Abeba had on Thursday asked it to change the itinerary of the returning 1,100 Ethiopians";
- "Everything was in order. The people were already there in a bus when the Ethiopian authorities gave a red light, citing security reasons" told AFP ICRC's director in Eritrea, Jean Paul Jacquot, adding that a group of Eritreans had made the same journey in reverse route on Tuesday. "Are they perhaps trying to slow down the process, with 2,600 people being ready to leave?" he wondered.

What these reports establish clearly are the following:

1. Ethiopia flagrantly violated ICRC rules and norms in the inhuman deportation of over 75,000 ethnic Eritreans that it has and continues to perpetrate. Indeed, the ICRC was never allowed to visit or escort the deportees. Moreover, in most cases, the ICRC, and through it the Eritrean Government, were never informed in advance of the number of deportees and the border posts at which they would be dumped. The Government of Eritrea was usually informed of the probable location by the ICRC at the last minute, making logistical preparations for receiving them extremely difficult. Often the Ethiopian regime would dump one batch (usually in excess of 2,000) of ethnic Eritreans in Omhager (western part of Eritrea) and dump the next batch in Burrie (eastern Eritrea) with no purpose other than causing maximum logistical difficulties to the Government of Eritrea and undue pain to the deportees. This has caused the death of several people, particularly among those deported along Burrie, due to sunstroke.
2. The repatriation of Ethiopians from Eritrea that begun recently and which was prompted by massive internal dislocation brought about by Ethiopia's invasion of sovereign Eritrean territory was initiated with the active involvement and support of the ICRC. It was interrupted because Ethiopia refused to cooperate invoking false excuses. Eritrea in fact requested from the beginning that the ICRC arrange transport for, and escort across the border, the Ethiopians who want to go back home voluntarily or those who may have to go back because they do not possess the necessary legal permits for continued stay in the country. This remains it current position. But as illustrated in the AFP story, ICRC's involvement was blocked and interrupted because Ethiopia refused to cooperate and the ICRC could not take part unless there was an explicit agreement by both parties. Ethiopia's allegations of "deportation without ICRC involvement" are thus vicious distortions of the real facts.

Moreover, we must recall that it is Ethiopia, which has and continues to officially sanction the deportation of ethnic Eritreans. (Remember the Prime Minister's gloating that "his government has the right to expel anyone whose colour of his eyes it did not like"). It is Ethiopia which continues to incarcerate, for more than two years now, thousands of Eritreans in the Dedesa concentration camp simply because they are of "military age". Partial reports that have reached the Government of Eritrea indicate that 12 of them died under torture in 1998 alone.

Since the signing of the cessation of hostilities in Algiers on June 18th, Ethiopia has not only continued to deport ethnic Eritreans from Ethiopia, but it has deported 15,000 Eritreans from their own sovereign land; from the lower Gash Barka area. And it continues to perpetrate gross crimes on those remaining in the occupied areas, including by preventing access to humanitarian agencies to monitor the situation and to provide them with the necessary assistance.

All the while Eritrea has not taken retaliatory acts that could have been justified under the circumstances. The first acts of the Eritrean Parliament in response to Ethiopia's policy of ethnic cleansing was to adopt a bill aimed at protecting the human rights of Ethiopians living in the country. Ethiopia has thus no moral right or justifiable cause to accuse Eritrea of "foul play".

So why this vicious campaign now? The reasons, which are multifaceted, consist of:

1. its unwillingness to receive its own nationals;
2. its desire to create a sense of tension and delay the deployment of the peacekeeping mission;
3. its desire to create a pretext for resorting to war at an opportune moment.

The behaviour of the Ethiopian regime in the proximity talks; its insistence in Algiers on signing a partial agreement in stark contradiction to its position for the past two years on a comprehensive package ('nothing is agreed until everything is agreed"); and, its aversion to a UN peacekeeping force are indeed tangible indicators that betray its real motives

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Asmara
25 August 2000

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Agenda item 22
Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal

Solemn appeal made by the President of the General Assembly on 1 September 2000 in connection with the observance of the Olympic Truce

The President of the General Assembly has the honour to make the following solemn appeal in connection with the observance of the Olympic Truce:

On 24 November 1999, the General Assembly adopted resolution 54/34, in which it urged Member States to observe the Olympic Truce during the games of the XXVII Olympiad, which will be held at Sydney, Australia, from 15 September to 1 October 2000.

The idea of the Olympic Truce dates back to an ancient Greek tradition of *ekecheiria*, in keeping with which all hostilities would cease during the Games.

Today, the Olympic Truce has become an expression of mankind's desire to build a world based on the rules of fair competition, peace, humanity and reconciliation. Moreover, the Olympic Truce epitomizes a bridge from the old and wise tradition to the most compelling purpose of the United Nations — the maintenance of international peace and security. As the most visible illustration of this connection in goals and aspirations between the Olympic movement and the United Nations, the flag of the United Nations now flies at all competition sites of the Olympic Games.

The forthcoming Sydney Games — the first Olympic Games of the twenty-first century and of the new millennium — should be a harmonious, athlete-oriented and environmentally committed event. The period of the Games, and beyond, should provide an opportunity for dialogue, reconciliation and the search for durable solutions for the restoration of peace in all areas of conflict, where the first victims are the children, the youth and women.

Humanity's quest is for a world free of hatred and war, a world where ideals of peace, goodwill and mutual respect form the basis of relations among countries. That goal may still remain elusive, but if the Olympic Truce can help us to bring about even a brief respite from conflict and strife, it will send a powerful message of hope to the international community. With the United Nations flag flying in Sydney

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at the XXVII Olympic Games, adherence to the Truce will gain even greater symbolism.

I therefore solemnly appeal to all States to demonstrate their commitment to the spirit of fraternity and understanding among peoples by observing the Olympic Truce during the Sydney Games.

I urge all those who are now engaged in armed struggle — for whatever reasons and wherever it might be — to suspend hostilities in keeping with the observance. I urge everybody, individually and collectively, to take the initiative to abide by the Olympic Truce as a way of promoting goodwill and encouraging the peaceful settlement of conflicts in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

United Nations A/54/97

General Assembly

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Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 22
Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal

Letter dated 5 September 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to an appeal by the President of the Hellenic Republic, Constantinos Stephanopoulos, regarding the observance of the Olympic Truce on the occasion of the twenty-seventh Olympic Games due to take place in Sydney, Australia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 22.

(Signed) Elias **Gounaris**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 5 September 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As President of the Hellenic Republic, birthplace of the Olympic Games, but also as a concerned citizen of the world, I am launching an appeal to all concerned parties to exercise their legitimate powers in support of the observance of the Olympic Truce on the occasion of the XXVIIth Olympic Games due to be held in Sydney, Australia.

I appeal for the laying down of all weapons and for the ceasing of all war preparations among countries and peoples currently in armed conflict or on the verge of conflict, for, at least, the duration of the Games, and one would hope even following their closing. This is, by its nature, an appeal solely based on humanity, transcending the inevitable questions of "right" and "wrong", of history or current realities, between parties to any conflict.

As you know, the Games will be held from 15 September to 1 October 2000. In this regard, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that, in 1999, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution, with 180 Member States, including Greece, as sponsors — a record number, in which it urged Member States to abide by the Olympic Truce, individually and collectively, and to pursue, in conformity with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, the peaceful settlement of all international conflicts through diplomatic means.

My appeal is grounded on a history of concrete results, not romantic notions. Since antiquity, the concepts of the Olympic Games and of the ceasing of all hostilities for their duration have been inextricably linked. Throughout the duration of the Olympic Truce, from the seventh day prior to the opening of the Games to the seventh day following their closing, all conflicts ceased, allowing athletes, artists and spectators to travel to Olympia, participate in the Games and return to their homelands in safety.

Furthermore, the Olympic Truce symbolized the unique value of sport as a conduit for peaceful competition and coexistence among people, even among those who felt that differences between them were so great as to compel them to fight. All those combatants laid down their weapons during the Olympic Games, and sometimes even after the Games' closing.

In our "global village" the link between the biggest sport and cultural event, the Olympics, and a culture of peace will become a strong inspiration for the younger generations of our world. This concept continues to inspire my country today. This is the reason we are hosting the Olympic Truce Center which is chaired by the President of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, who has consistently promoted this noble idea as President of the Committee.

Since truce could be observed and respected by all during those ancient times, my hope is that it can be observed and respected in our time as well, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, if we can only show the required strength and foresight.

By this message I appeal to you to become a guiding force in the modern Olympic Truce movement. Through officially announcing the observance of the Olympic Truce in your regions this year, you will be sending the world a powerful message of moderation and humanity with far-reaching repercussions. Your brave

example of voluntarily choosing to abide by the tradition of the Olympic Truce and Olympic ideals during the Sydney Olympics would spread around the world and give hope to millions of people, including children in conflict-torn regions. For my part, I assure you that my country and I will do all we can to disseminate your message of hope the world over.

Constantinos **Stephanopoulos**